

Lambda Letters Project

32610

Vol. 7, No. 6 June, 1999

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Looking Up Department

This is a Very Good Year!

Lavender Library, Archives
and Cultural Exchange
Sacramento, CA

Last month we reported on a ground-breaking decision by California's Labor Commissioner in which the Commissioner ruled against a school district which discriminated against a teacher on the basis of his perceived sexual orientation.

This month we are happy to report that a record number of bills of importance to our community have been introduced in the State Legislature and they are all doing very well.

Lambda Letters has been tracking the following numbers of state bills:

13 HIV/AIDS bills

8 L/G/B/T bills

9 Person of Color bills

7 Women's bills

We supported all but three of them. The bills we support have been voted on many times and they have always won every vote.

We opposed an HIV names reporting bill and it was defeated. We had watch positions on two bills because, at first, it wasn't clear what the bills would

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Your Letters Work

LLP Working At Lightning Speed!

Lambda Letters' productivity continues to climb at an astonishing speed. It appears possible that the Project will have another record-breaking year in 1999.

Since its creation in 1988, the Project has seen rapid growth in the number of letters and e-mail messages delivered to legislators and other elected officials each year, often doubling each year. The count for 1998 was nearly three times the count for the previous year. In the first four months of 1999, Lambda Letters delivered over 40,000 letters and messages, 5,500 more than in the same period last year.

We think the large number of queer-positive bills introduced this year is partly the result of the large flow of mail that we have been delivering each year. This year 18 state legislators sent us the names and phone numbers of their staff members who work on our issues. That creates better communication between us and them. In May, we received calls from three legislators' offices asking our help on their bills. Things are looking up for all of us!

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Lambda Letters Progress Report

Messages Collected

| | |
|----------------|--------------------------|
| April, 1999 | 20,029 letters & e-mails |
| In all of 1999 | 40,761 letters & e-mails |

Dollars Spent

| | |
|----------------|---------|
| April, 1999 | \$2,695 |
| In all of 1999 | \$7,866 |

Can You Help?

Please support the very important work of the Lambda Letters Project with your contributions.

Lambda Letters Project

Statement of Purpose

To promote people of color, feminist, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and HIV/AIDS status advocacy, and to bring people of color, women, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgendered persons, and persons affected by or living with HIV/AIDS into full participation in the mainstream of American society now, exercising all the privileges and responsibilities thereof.

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Publication of the name of any person or organization in articles or advertising in the Lambda Letters Project newsletter is not to be construed as any indication of the sexual orientation of such person or organization.

The Lambda Letters Project does not sell or loan its mailing list to anyone. We give no information about who is, or is not, a member of the Project. We do, occasionally, send mailings on behalf of other worthwhile organizations, but this is done by our own volunteers so that no other organization has the opportunity to copy our mailing lists.

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Postmaster: send address changes to the address above.

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quarter-page ads \$20 per issue, half-page ads \$30 per issue,
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Support Women's Health Needs

by Boyce Hinman

Soon after the male impotency prescription drug Viagra was approved by the Federal Drug Administration (FDA), most insurance companies agreed to cover the cost of the medication. The typical monthly cost of Viagra is \$60. For years women have fought to persuade insurance companies to cover the cost of prescription contraceptives. Most companies have refused saying that the medications are too expensive. The typical monthly cost of birth control pills is \$25-\$30 a month.

In 1995, the latest year for which statistics are available, there were 240,000 abortions in California. Many of these might have been avoided if insurance companies had covered prescription contraceptives. While 97% of large group insurance plans cover prescription medications, only 33% cover oral contraceptives.

Oral contraceptives can greatly reduce the number of unplanned pregnancies and the financial disruption and health complications that can accompany such unplanned pregnancies. Also, there is evidence of health benefits to women from taking oral contraceptives. For example, a study published in the New England Journal of Medicine found that women in families with a history of ovarian cancer had a 60% reduction in ovarian cancer if they used oral contraceptives for six or more years.

And yet the insurance companies resist paying for the medications. Two bills to deal with this situation have been introduced in the State Legislature. S.B. 41 (introduced by Senator Jackie Speier) would require that disability insurance policies that cover prescription medications should include FDA approved oral contraceptives in their list of covered medications. A.B. 39 (Introduced by Assembly Member Robert Hertzberg) would require individual and group health care plans to provide coverage for the medications.

Each bill has been approved by its house of origin. We have been asked to write to Governor Davis urging him to lend his support to these bills during the legislative process and to sign them if they make it to his desk. He will be getting lots of pressure from certain churches to oppose the bills. Please write to Governor Davis urging him to support S.B. 41 and A.B. 39.

Shepard's Law: The Hate Crimes Prevention Act

ByCarolynn Race

Following the deaths of Matthew Shepard and countless other LGBT victims, mainstream society became more aware of a phenomenon the LGBT community has known for a long time: lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgendered persons are all too often the victims of hate crimes.

Since Mathew's death, several LGBT organizations, individuals and allies have turned their grief into outrage and advocacy — urging members of Congress to pass the Hate Crimes Prevention Act (H.R. 77 and S. 622), which would amend current federal law to include real or perceived sexual orientation, gender and disability so the FBI would be able to investigate and prosecute violent hate crimes against gays, lesbians and bisexuals. Current law already allows investigation and prosecution on the basis of race, religion, national origin and color, but doesn't include sexual orientation.

We must urge members of Congress to support this measure — with the inclusion of sexual orientation and gender.

This legislation would not only aid in prosecuting perpetrators of violent, unconscionable acts; it would also send a message to all that hate crimes will not be tolerated in our nation.

All Americans deserve protection from hate. We must stand up and protect everyone — to fight against bigotry, intolerance and bias-motivated violence.

Act now and write your congressman. Tell them to call for the passage of the Hate Crimes Prevention Act with the inclusion of gender and sexual orientation. Congress must step up and send a message that it is not okay for a college student to be maimed because of his sexual orientation, nor is it acceptable for anyone to commit a violent act against any person because of his/her sexual orientation or gender identity.

Help Maximize the State's Budget for HIV/AIDS Programs

By Marty Martinez

By the time you read this, California's 1999-2000 fiscal year budget will be nearing completion. For HIV/AIDS programs, it was a wild year. On January 8 of this year, Governor Davis issued his first proposed budget, in which \$4.1 million in state funds were shifted out of HIV/AIDS programs into other budget items. The shift in funds came from the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP), which provides AIDS-related drugs to those who can't otherwise afford them. The ADAP program had a surplus of funds, and the governor redirected that surplus into non-AIDS-related programs despite the fact that most AIDS programs had not received an increase in years and the number of people living with HIV and AIDS continues to grow rapidly.

Advocates pressed both the governor and the legislature to put the surplus ADAP money into other HIV/AIDS programs, and to increase HIV program funding even further in light of the increase in the number of persons living with HIV and AIDS, and in light of the growing awareness of the disproportionate impact of HIV on communities of color. In addition, advocates sought restoration of \$1.6 million in funding for family planning clinics to provide anonymous HIV testing services, a program that was cut by former Governor Pete Wilson.

Both Senate and Assembly subcommittees have favorably responded by increasing funding for HIV programs, such as prevention, and for residential care facilities for the chronically ill—which essentially is HIV-related housing. In addition, the governor has released a revised budget that keeps the ADAP surplus in the overall AIDS budget. This is an enormous victory. We are thankful to the governor and legislature for doing this, but we must keep up the pressure. There are differences in the level of funding the Assembly, Senate and governor provided HIV programs, and it is important that HIV programs are funded at the highest possible level.

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HOPE and Economic Assistance for Sub-Saharan Africa

By Marty Martinez

H.R. 772, sponsored by Representative Jesse L. Jackson Jr., is known as the Human Rights, Opportunity, Partnership and Empowerment for Africa Act (the HOPE for Africa Act).

This bill would provide a good deal of economic assistance for sub-Saharan African countries by forgiving all U.S. debt to sub-Saharan countries, and encouraging other nations to forgive their debts to sub-Saharan countries as well. This is important, as debt and interest payments from poor countries can equal a large percentage of the nation's entire gross domestic product. The HOPE for Africa Act would also eliminate quotas the U.S. charges on many of the goods sub-Saharan African nations export to the U.S. This would allow sub-Saharan nations to sell more goods in the U.S., thus boosting their economies. The Act would also provide assistance to sub-Saharan nations toward the building of improved infrastructure and the combating of illnesses and diseases such as AIDS, which has ravaged many African nations.

The HOPE for Africa Act is lagging in several different committees of the House of Representatives and needs a push from our congressmembers to come to the House floor for a vote. Please sign and send the enclosed letter, encouraging your congressmember to support this bill.



Deborah A. Brooks

Certified Public Accountant

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June Legislative Update Deadlines

This month a fateful deadline looms over the legislative process. According to the State Legislature's rules, all state bills must be approved by their house of origin, and sent to the other house, no later than June 4. Thus, all bills beginning with "A.B." must have been approved by the Assembly, and all those beginning with "S.B." must have been approved by the Senate no later than that date. Any bill not approved by its house of origin by June 4th is dead for this year.

In the following list, you will find some bills that beat the deadline. Other bills on the list may also have been approved by their house of origin by June 4. However, this article was prepared in late May. As a result, some votes may have occurred after the article was written but before you read it. We'll give you a full report on the fates of the bills listed below in our July newsletter.

However, we will also post an updated version of this list on our web page as soon after June 4 as possible. If you have Internet access, you can review the list by going to our web page, www.lambdaletters.org, and clicking the "Legislative Update" button.

As you will see below, many bills are in the suspense file of either the Senate or Assembly Appropriations Committee. Basically that means the committee has put off voting on the bill until it becomes clearer what money will be available to pay for the programs contemplated by the bills. Shortly before the June 4 deadline, the committee will prioritize these bills and approve the ones considered most important and for which money is available.

Here is the status, as of late May, of bills being tracked by Lambda Letters.

*Build Self-Esteem to Succeed
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HIV/AIDS Issues

A.B. 16 (Mike Honda, D of San Jose)

Purpose: Under current law the state and counties split the costs of providing publicly funded, in home supportive services for aged, blind and disabled persons. However, if the counties or the agencies they contract with to provide the services grant a pay raise to the workers providing the care, the counties must foot the whole cost of the raises. This bill changes the law to say that even these pay raises will be funded equally by the state and the counties.

Status: Is in the suspense file of the Assembly Appropriations Committee. Probably will be voted on May 26.

LLP Position: Support.

A.B. 103 (Carole Migden, D of San Francisco)

Purpose: Would require the State Department of Health Services to implement a unique identifier system in order to conduct HIV surveillance and improve data collection while maximizing confidentiality protections.

Status: Is in the suspense file of the Assembly Appropriations Committee. Probably will be voted on May 26.

LLP Position: Support.

A.B. 142 (Kevin Shelley, D of San Francisco)

Purpose: to require that every health care service plan provide medical care in accordance with accepted medical practices and provide emergency health care services and to ensure confidentiality of the medical information of an enrollee. Plans must provide access to a wide variety of primary health care providers and specialty health care providers to ensure that the enrollee is able to choose a qualified doctor or other health care provider.

Status: Approved by the Assembly and Sent to the Senate. Assigned to the Senate Insurance Committee. No hearing date set yet.

LLP Position: Support.

A.B. 155 (Carole Migden, D of San Francisco)

Purpose: This bill would allow people with AIDS who return to work, but whose income is below 250% of the federal poverty standard, to continue to receive Medi-Cal benefits.

Status: Is in the suspense file of the Assembly

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June Legislative Update

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Appropriations Committee. Probably will be voted on May 26.

LLP Position: Support.

A.B. 217 (Scott Wildman, D of Glendale)

Purpose: This bill would provide that specified drugs or agents that are approved by the federal Food and Drug Administration for use in the treatment of AIDS or the human immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV) shall be added to the drug formularies used by defined Medi-Cal managed care plans and by primary care providers under specified case management contracts.

Status: Passed by the Assembly and sent to the Senate. Assigned to the Senate Health and Human Services Committee. No hearing date set yet.

LLP Position: Support.

A.B. 518 (Kerry Mazzoni, D of San Rafael)

Purpose: This bill would permit local jurisdictions to establish legal clean needle and syringe exchange programs in California to reduce the spread of AIDS and other diseases spread by the shared use of needles.

Status: Passed by the Assembly and sent to the Senate. It will probably be assigned to the Senate Health Committee. No hearing date set yet.

LLP Position: Support.

A.B. 851 (Fred Keeley, D of Santa Cruz)

Purpose: Expands the AIDS prevention education requirement in grades 7 through 12 to include instruction in prevention of sexually transmitted diseases and would require related instructional materials to be medically accurate and free of race, gender and ethnic bias.

Status: Is in the suspense file of the Assembly

Appropriations Committee. Probably will be voted on May 26.

LLP Positions: Support.

A.B. 1047 (Marco Firebaugh, D of Huntington Park)

Purpose: Would require that the state make new AIDS medications, provided under the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP), available to patients within 30 days of being notified that the drugs have been approved by the FDA for the treatment of AIDS.

Status: Is in the suspense file of the Assembly Appropriations Committee. Probably will be voted on May 26.

LLP Position: Support.

A.B. 1053 (Helen Thomson, D of Vacaville)

Purpose: Would prohibit HMOs from forbidding doctors from prescribing medications that cost more than permitted by the HMO and would prohibit HMOs from reducing reimbursement to doctors for doing so.

Status: Is in the suspense file of the Assembly Appropriations Committee. Probably will be voted on May 26.

LLP position: Support.

S.B. 77 (Kevin Murray, D of Los Angeles)

Purpose: Existing law says a worker's family may apply for a worker's compensation death benefit when a worker dies from a job-related accident or illness. The claim must be submitted within a specified time from the onset of the job-related illness or accident. A longer time is allowed in deaths from asbestosis because of the typically longer time from exposure to asbestos and death from asbestosis. S.B. 77 says that HIV and AIDS have a similarly long period of development and so should have a similarly long time during which a claim for a worker's compensation death benefit may be claimed.

Status: Passed by the Senate and sent to the Assembly. Assigned to the Assembly Appropriations Committee. No hearing date set in that committee yet.

LLP Position: Support.

S.B. 1029 (Ray Haynes, R of Riverside)

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June Legislative Update

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Purpose: To require the reporting, to county health agencies and others, the names of those who test positive for HIV

Status: Defeated in the Senate Health and Human Services Committee. Granted reconsideration. This means the author may try again to get the bill passed. But he must wait till next year to try again.

LLP Position: Oppose.

S.B. 1258 (Richard Polanco, D of Los Angeles)

Purpose: Would require California to solicit approval from the federal government for California to provide Medi-Cal coverage to individuals who are HIV positive, but who do not have AIDS. Current federal regulations limit the provision of Medi-Cal to people who have AIDS or who are otherwise disabled.

Status: Approved by all necessary Senate committees. Sent to the floor of the Senate for a final vote in that house.

LLP Position: Support.

S.J.R. 1 (Jackie Speier, D of San Mateo)

Purpose: This measure would memorialize the federal government to take steps to ensure that persons abandoned by Medicare HMOs have access to other HMOs or Medigap policies and to rescind the determination that disabled persons under 65 years of age enrolled in HMOs do not have the same rights as other Medicare enrollees, and would memorialize the President to issue an Executive Order directing his administration to work closely and coordinate with California and other states to guide and assist Medicare enrollees who are abandoned by their HMOs to obtain new Medicare coverage.

Status: Was passed by the Senate and sent to the Assembly. Assigned to the Assembly Health Com-

mittee. No hearing date set yet.

LLP Position: Support.

Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender Issues

A.B. 26 (Carole Migden, D of San Francisco)

Purpose: This bill would define "domestic partners" and provide for the registration of domestic partnerships with the Secretary of State. The bill would also specify procedures for the termination of domestic partnerships.

Status: Passed by all necessary Assembly Committees. Awaiting a final vote on the Assembly floor.

LLP Position: Support.

A.B. 107 (Wally Knox, D of Los Angeles)

Purpose: This bill would authorize the state and local governments to provide health care benefits to the domestic partners of their employees.

Status: Passed all necessary Assembly committees.

Awaiting a final vote on the Assembly floor.

LLP Position: Support.

A.B. 208 (Wally Knox, D of Los Angeles)

Purpose: This bill would provide that the penalty for a defendant who is found guilty of murder in the first degree is imprisonment in the state prison for life without the possibility of parole if the victim was intentionally killed because of the victim's disability, gender or sexual orientation or because of the defendant's perception of the victim's disability, gender or sexual orientation, and this allegation has been charged and found to be true.

Status: Is in the suspense file of the Assembly Appropriations Committee. Probably will be voted on May 26.

LLP Position: Support.

A.B. 222 (Sheila Kuehl, D of Santa Monica)

Purpose: Called the Dignity For All Students Act. Would amend the California Education Code to add "sexual orientation" to those sections that now protect students from other forms of discrimination. It would specifically bar sexual orientation discrimination in public education, including student programs and activities, athletics, curricula, employment and financial aid.

Status: Passed all necessary Assembly committees. Awaiting a final vote on the Assembly floor.

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Today's Voice for
Spiritual Choice

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A Wake Up Call to Wholeness
... to make a difference in the World

June Legislative Update

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LLP Position: Support.

A.B. 901(Wally Knox, D of Los Angeles)

Purpose: Currently if an employer provides health insurance for the domestic partner of an employee, the employee must pay state income tax on the value of the insurance. This bill would exempt health insurance benefits for domestic partners from state income tax.

Status: Is in the suspense file of the Assembly Appropriations Committee. Probably will be voted on May 26.

LLP Position: Support.

A.B. 1001 (Antonio Villaraigosa, D of Los Angeles)

Purpose: Would amend the California Fair Employment and Housing Act to prohibit employment and housing discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

Status: Is in the suspense file of the Assembly Appropriations Committee. Probably will be voted on May 26.

LLP Position: Support.

S.B. 75 (Kevin Murray, D of Los Angeles)

Purpose: This bill would enact the Domestic Partnership Act of 1999, which would define "domestic partners" and provide for the registration of domestic partnerships with the Secretary of State. The bill would also specify procedures for the termination of domestic partnerships.

Status: Passed by all necessary Senate committees. Awaiting a final vote on the Senate floor.

LLP Position: Support.

S.B. 118 (Tom Hayden, D of Los Angeles)

Purpose: To require employers to grant family and medical leave to employees who need to care for

their domestic partners.

Status: Passed by all necessary Senate committees. Awaiting a final vote on the Senate floor.

LLP Position: Support.

Person of Color Issues

A.B. 43 (Antonio Villaraigosa, D of Los Angeles)

Purpose: Existing law establishes the Healthy Families Program to arrange for the provision of health services to eligible children whose family's income is less than 150% of the federal poverty guidelines. This bill would increase the limit to less than 250% of the federal poverty level and would provide that a child who is otherwise eligible for participation shall not be denied eligibility based on the child's date of entry into the United States.

Status: Is in the suspense file of the Assembly Appropriations Committee. Probably will be voted on May 26.

LLP Position: Support.

A.B. 63 (Denise Moreno Ducheny, D of National City)

Purpose: Would create an Office of Border Health, which would act to increase cooperation between Mexican and California/US health authorities in tracking disease, monitoring the health of persons along the border region, and would convene a task force of community stakeholders to help develop a strategic plan to address the health concerns in the border region.

Status: Is in the suspense file of the Assembly Appropriations Committee. Probably will be voted on May 26.

LLP Position: Support.

A.B. 1463 (Gil Cedillo, D of Los Angeles)

Purpose: Existing law requires that every applicant for a California driver's license must provide proof of citizenship or evidence that he or she is a legal resident alien. This bill would remove that requirement.

Status: Passed all necessary Assembly committees and sent to the Assembly floor for a final vote.

LLP Position: Support.

S.B. 44 (Richard Polanco, D of Los Angeles)

Purpose: This bill says that the laws of California,

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June Legislative Update

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including the restrictions on affirmative action, do not prevent governmental agencies from engaging in focused outreach and recruitment of minority groups and women if any group is under represented in entry level positions or in an educational institution.

Status: Passed by the Senate and sent to the Assembly. Assigned to the Assembly Judiciary Committee. No hearing date set yet.

LLP Position: Support.

S.B. 66 (Kevin Murray, D of Culver City)

Purpose: Existing law requires the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training develop and disseminate training for police officers including instruction on racial and cultural diversity in order to foster mutual respect and cooperation between law enforcement and members of all racial and cultural groups. This bill additionally would require the commission to develop guidelines that California law enforcement agencies would be required to adopt for the purpose of establishing race neutral criminal profiles.

Status: In the suspense file of the Senate Appropriations Committee. Probably will be heard on May 27 or 28.

LLP Position: Support.

S.B. 78 (Kevin Murray, D of Culver City)

Purpose: Existing law requires the Department of Justice to issue an annual report containing the criminal statistics of the preceding calendar year. This bill would require this annual report to contain information about the race, ethnicity, approximate age and gender of the people stopped in traffic stops.

Status: Passed by all necessary Senate Committees. Awaiting a final vote on the Senate floor.

PFINGST
REALTY

VICKI PFINGST

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LLP Position: Support.

S.B. 82 (John Vasconcellos, D of San Jose)

Purpose: This bill would provide that any alien who is otherwise eligible for Medi-Cal services, but who does not meet specified requirements relating to residency status (undocumented alien), is eligible for medically necessary pregnancy-related services.

Status: In the suspense file of the Senate Appropriations Committee. Probably will be heard on May 27 or 28.

LLP Position: Support.

Women's Issues

A.B. 39 (Robert Hertzberg, D of Van Nuys)

Purpose: To require individual and group health care service plans to cover the cost of FDA approved prescription contraceptives.

Status: Passed the Assembly and sent to the Senate. Assigned to the Senate Insurance Committee. No hearing date set yet.

LLP Position: Support.

A.B. 40 (Howard Wayne, D of San Diego)

Purpose: This bill would establish the Breast Cancer Treatment Program for purposes of providing breast cancer treatment services to uninsured and underinsured women with incomes at or below 200% of the federal poverty level, and would require the State Department of Health Services, only when the Legislature has appropriated funds for the program, to administer the program.

Status: Is in the suspense file of the Assembly Appropriations Committee. Probably will be voted on May 26.

LLP Position: Support.

S.B. 41 (Jackie Speier, D of Daly City)

Purpose: To require disability insurance providers that cover prescription medications to include FDA approved prescription contraceptives in their list of covered medications.

Status: Passed the Senate and assigned to the Assembly Health Committee. No hearing date set yet.

LLP Position: Support.

S.B. 56 (Hilda Solis, D of El Monte)

Purpose: Would prohibit employers from punishing
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June Legislative Update

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employees who take time off to testify in court in domestic abuse cases as long as prior to taking off, gives reasonable notice to the employer that he or she is required to appear in court to obtain or attempt to obtain any relief to help ensure the health, safety or welfare of a domestic violence victim or his or her child.

Status: Passed by all necessary Senate committees and sent to the Senate floor for a final vote.

LLP Position: Support.

S.B. 193 (Joe Baca, D of San Bernardino)

Purpose: Existing law provides for the Breast Cancer Research Account in the Breast Cancer Fund. Ninety percent of the moneys in the Breast Cancer Research Account is allocated to the Breast Cancer Research Program created at the University of California.

This bill would require the State Department of Health Services to offer for sale breast cancer license plates to be sold at a price determined by the department, with the proceeds to be deposited into the Breast Cancer Research Account in the Breast Cancer Fund.

Status: Was passed by its policy committees and sent to the Senate Appropriations Committee for a vote on May 27 or 28.

LLP Position: Support.



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More Good News!

Domestic Partner Health Benefits Approved

Recently the Joint Rules Committee of the California State Legislature approved domestic partner health insurance benefits for employees of



the state legislature. Soon legislative employees will be able to add their domestic partners to the employer-provided health insurance offered by the State Legislature to its employees. The legislature will make up to \$340 available to cover the cost of insurance for an employee's domestic partner and any dependents.

The effective date for the new coverage is uncertain at this point. However, the open enrollment period for legislative employees is October through December. Quite possibly that will be the time during which legislative staff may apply for the new coverage.

Some Republican legislators have opposed the new insurance coverage. However, the Democrats have a solid majority on the Joint Rules Committee and so the new policy is unlikely to be reversed. The legislature controls its own personnel matters and so the insurance plan does not need to be put in the form of a bill for approval by the two houses of the legislature or approved by the Governor. The decision of the Joint Rules Committee is all that is necessary.

This action bodes well for two bills in the State Legislature. One would allow state and local governments to offer domestic partner health insurance to their employees (A.B. 107). Another (S.B. 118) would remove the current rule that employees receiving such a benefit would owe state tax on the value of the insurance being offered to the employee's domestic partner.

Encouraging Survey Results

In very positive news for our community, researchers for the Gay and Lesbian Victory Foundation found that we are gaining support among the general public, and even among conservative Christians. The Foundation surveyed the general public on several questions of interest to our community. They found that 77% of voters would consider voting for a gay candidate for the state legislature or Congress if the candidate had the right stand on the issues. Sixty five percent of Republicans, 85% percent of Democrats and 81% of independents said they would do so.

There was surprising support, across Christian faiths, for gay candidates who were right on the issues. Sixty four percent of fundamentalist Christians, 81% of mainline Protestants and 87% of Catholics said they would consider voting for a gay candidate for the state legislature or Congress if the candidate was right on the issues. In addition, 67% of voters said they would consider voting for a gay or lesbian presidential candidate.

The survey also found strong support for laws to ban sexual orientation-based employment discrimination. Specifically, 77% of voters supported laws to ban such discrimination, including 67% of Republicans, 70% of fundamentalist Christians, 80% of mainline Protestants and 78% of Catholics. Similarly, large percentages of people said that crimes motivated by bias based on sexual orientation should be prohibited by law. Legislation now in Congress would ban such crimes.

In addition, the survey found that 56% of voters think that gays and lesbians should have the right to health care benefits for their partners and 55% said that gay service members should not be discharged from the U.S. military for disclosing their sexual orientation.

All in all, these survey results are good news.

Don't Know Who Represents You?

Just ask us and we'll send you a complete list of your elected officials. Or go to www.lambdaletters.org to find out who represents you.



Assertive Woman Wanted!

Do you get angry about how little the politicians are doing about breast cancer? Are you mad about the way they are nibbling away at a woman's right to choose? Do you get steamed about their inattention to the very serious problem of domestic abuse?

Don't get angry, write letters! In fact, get your friends and neighbors to write thousands of letters!! Oh sure, you ask, how can I do that? You could be our Women's Issue Advocate.

You bring us your knowledge of the issues women care about. We'll bring you information about the legislation or government policies that affect those issues. You write a brief letter and article supporting or opposing those bills and policies. We publish your letter and article in our monthly mailing to our members, post them on our web page and distribute them via our Internet legislative alert system. The result: hundreds, sometimes thousands, of letters flowing into elected officials' offices. All because you wrote one letter and article on an issue that you care about.

If this idea intrigues you, consider becoming our Women's Issue Advocate. If you have reasonably good writing skills and access to the Internet, you might be just the person for the job. We can show you how to find the legislation that affects the lives of women and train you in the process of writing letters to legislators. All you would have to do is write one letter and article a month. If you'd like to give it a try, let us know by including a note when you return your signed letters to us. Or contact us at (916) 965-6851 or at LambdaLP@aol.com.

This is a Very Good Year!

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do. One turned out to be an OK bill and it is doing well. This bill just says cities cannot restrict where churches have their services. The other bill turned out to be a bad one and it was defeated. This was a bill to set strict standards for abortion providers.

Legislatively speaking, this is one of the best years our community has seen in a long time.

No On Knight

Senator Pete Knight and his supporters have succeeded in adding the "Definition of Marriage" initiative to the March 7, 2000 California Ballot. The initiative states: Only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California.

Although it is not legal in California for same-sex couples to marry, California law does recognize all marriages that are contracted legally in every other state of the union.

Same-sex marriage isn't legal anywhere in the United States at present, but activists are seeking a breakthrough in other states (Vermont in particular). If another state legalizes same-sex marriage, California would automatically accept the marriage as valid unless the Knight initiative passes.

Senator William "Pete" Knight of Palmdale has consistently worked against basic civil rights and safety for the LGBT communities. He works closely with radical right-wing organizations such as the Christian Coalition, the Family Research Council and the Traditional Values Coalition — all of which are helping to finance this initiative.

These organizations oppose employment and housing nondiscrimination and hate crime laws that include sexual orientation. They support criminalizing same-sex, consensual, adult sexual behaviors with jail time and fines.

They are attacking custody laws and working to separate children from their gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender parents regardless of the child's best interests. These groups believe that marriage is the wedge they can exploit to further these aims.

The religious political extremists supporting this initiative are pursuing a well-developed agenda that includes threats to all people regardless of sexual orientation, religious belief or social standing.

No one is safe when zealots have political power. These extremists push for a social order that includes:

- ◆ Restricting a woman's reproductive freedom
- ◆ Narrowly defining "Separation of [their] Church and State"
- ◆ Dismantling California's Fair Employment

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Volunteers Put Power in Pride

Lambda Letters members, working in shifts, collected more than 1,200 May letters during the Long Beach Pride Festival on May 22-23 weekend. Thank you! You know who you are!

Board members Lynn Dobbs and Jan Hansen spent an additional two days sorting, adding legislator's names and mailing the thick stack of letters. Most were addressed to legislators from Southern California, but many were from other parts of the state. A few were even delivered to our "friend," Senator "Pete" Knight.

Many festival goers stopped by to say "Thank you." I guess the name of Lambda Letters is getting around. We say "Thank you" to our members for spreading the word about the important work of the Project.

Check with us for opportunities to volunteer at other Pride festivals this year.



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No On Knight

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and Housing protections for unmarried mixed-gender or same-gender couples

- ◆ Requiring a "finding of fault" for divorce

Without civil marriage, same-sex couples and alternative families are needlessly exposed to innumerable, real harms. Civil marriage is society's way of recognizing and regulating the fact that couples have a special relationship to one another; that they make joint decisions, raise children together and

—take responsibility for caring for and supporting one another in times of crisis.

So far, our society has refused to recognize the reality of many lesbian, gay and bisexual peoples' lives. By categorizing our closest ties as meaningless and legally nonexistent,



society imposes financial, emotional and symbolic penalties on people who dare to love others of the same sex.

As a member of Lambda Letters, you already know the value of taking an active stand against injustice. The Knight Initiative is a major injustice waiting to happen. Let's educate ourselves, our friends and families. If you are interested in volunteering, or if you have additional questions, send mail to Californians for Fairness, 1625 North Schrader Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90028

Help Maximize the State's Budget for HIV/AIDS Programs

continued from page 4

The final stage of the budget process will be negotiations between the governor, Senate President Burton and Assembly Speaker Villaraigosa. By sending the accompanying letter to one of these elected officials, you will be urging him to stand for increased funding for HIV/AIDS programs in these negotiations, thus helping to ensure that AIDS advocates can maximize the level of funding these vital programs receive.

the news resource of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community

OUTWORD

newsmagazine

The staff and management of Outword Newsmagazine fully supports the work and goals of Lambda Letters Project and offers its profound gratitude to the volunteers and staff for making those goals a reality.

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It Just Won't Do

More New Members Needed

Earlier this year Lambda Letters' Board of Directors established a goal of having 1,000 members by year's end.

We made a marvelous beginning in April by adding 64 members to the Project. **However, our membership increased by only four members in May.** At that rate we will never reach 1,000 members by year's end.

Do you realize that the effectiveness of your letters is directly affected by the number of members we have? After all if only one person tells legislators they should ban discrimination, they can ignore the request. If 500 people say so, that's better. But legislators will really sit up and pay attention if 1,000 say **BAN DISCRIMINATION.**

We believe you are in the best possible position to help us reach our goal. You know the services we provide and you know the people in your community who would be most interested in taking advantage of those services.

Will you pledge to recruit one new member for Lambda Letters in the next 30 days? Please find one new member and have that person complete and return the following application form. Thank you for your help in this matter.

Membership Application

Please enroll me as a member of the Lambda Letters Project.

I enclose a check, made payable to Lambda Letters, in the amount of:

- ☐ \$35 membership.
- ☐ \$20 limited income membership.
- ☐ Please accept my request for a waiver of dues.

Name - _____

Please print name clearly.

Address - _____ City - _____ ZIP - _____

Please print name clearly.

Send To:

The Lambda Letters Project
6212 Silverton Way
Carmichael, CA 95608

Waiver Policy

**Lambda Letters does not deny membership due to lack of funds.
If necessary, please request a waiver of dues in the form below.**